

## Annual Congress Newsletter



### **Congress Defines Agenda for University Engineering**

*This year's annual EPC congress, held at Warwick University in early April, once again brought together key policymakers and leaders in UK Engineering. With participants from organisations including EPSRC, HEFCE and the new European Research Council, the Congress lived up to its billing as an essential annual event for those responsible for shaping engineering in UK Universities.*

*We are now looking forward to next year's congress in Edinburgh, which promises to be as stimulating, with themes for discussion including research funding in the wake of RAE 2008.*

**Professor Ray Allen,  
EPC President**



### **Educating Engineers for the 21st Century**



*Professor King, Vice Chancellor of Aston University, addresses EPC*

It is the paradox of engineering education. Never has the demand for engineers to meet global challenges been so clear, yet the proportion of UK students choosing the profession continues to fall.

Professor Julia King, drawing on the recent report she chaired for the Royal Academy of Engineering, discussed the dilemmas facing Universities in providing courses that will respond to the worsening shortfall in the provision of high calibre engineering graduates necessary for a successful 'knowledge economy'.

She said "Industry and universities are in good agreement on the ways in which university engineering courses should be improved to provide graduates better motivated and attuned to the needs of industry." Key to increasing motivation of students is innovation in course design and delivery supported by stronger links with industry.

- *The number of engineers in the UK undergraduate population has now fallen below 10%, well behind key competitor nations.*
- *By year 3 of their degree only 50% of engineering students intend to continue a career in engineering.*

*Professor King's presentation, along with others from the Congress, is available from the EPC website [www.epc.ac.uk](http://www.epc.ac.uk)*

## Lord Sainsbury Honoured by EPC



*Lord Sainsbury at Coombe Abbey*

Lord Sainsbury of Turville, the Minister for Science and Innovation from 1998 to 2006, attended the congress dinner at Coombe Abbey where he was presented with the EPC President's Award by Professor Ray Allen. The award was in recognition of Lord Sainsbury's role as a passionate advocate for science and engineering. Lord Sainsbury's interest in science was kindled at Cambridge University where he transferred from history to psychology because of a fascination with the breakthroughs of the time in DNA. His unpaid ministerial role later placed him at the heart of government policy making in science and engineering.

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## New Research Funding Bodies Open Up to Congress

The changing landscape for research funding was the focus of a major part of the EPC congress. William Cannell, head of the European Research Council strategy unit, described the objectives of this new institution which will have a budget of approximately €1 bn per year. Not surprisingly, great interest was shown in the funding schemes ERC will support, including those for new and established researchers.

David Way, Director of Operations for the Technology Strategy Board, outlined the key role of this new body in addressing the fragmented technology and innovation landscape in the UK. Focusing on challenge led innovation in sectors such as healthcare, energy and transport, the TSB looks to build an innovation climate between industry and academics. Knowledge transfer and collaborative R&D are key strands of the TSB activities.

Pat Killingley, of the British Council, discussed the opportunities the Prime Minister's Initiative provides for Universities as part of a 5 year strategy to secure the UK's position as a leader in international education.

*These presentations are available from the EPC website [www.epc.ac.uk](http://www.epc.ac.uk)*

## **2009 Congress**

The next **Annual Congress** will be held at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh from April 20th - 22nd 2009.

The congress will address topics of major importance for University Engineering with a topics including:

➤ *Employer engagement*

➤ *Research funding*

➤ *Profiling the future engineering student intake*

Once again the congress will bring together leading engineering academics and policymakers from government and funding bodies, providing a unique chance to discuss the issues of topical importance.

**Further details and booking information for the congress and other events are available on the EPC website [www.epc.ac.uk](http://www.epc.ac.uk)**